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PRESENTATION

OF THE

GOLD MEDALS

TO LADY FRANKLIN AND TO CAPTAIN SIR F. L. M'CLINTOCK.

THE President, the EARL DE GREY AND RIPON, read the following statements explanatory of the grounds on which the Council had awarded the Royal Medals respectively :—

Desirous of commemorating in an especial manner the Arctic researches of our associate the late Sir John Franklin, and of testifying to the fact that his expedition was the first to discover a North-West Passage, the Council of the Royal Geographical Society have awarded the Founder's Gold Medal to his widow, Lady Franklin, in token of their admiration of her noble and self-sacrificing perseverance in sending out, at her own cost, several searching expeditions, until at length the fate of her husband has been finally ascertained.

The Council has farther adjudicated the Patron's Gold Medal to Captain Sir F. L. M'Clintock, R.N., for the consummate skill and unflinching fortitude with which, in the *Fox* yacht, he and his gallant companions have not only enlarged our acquaintance with Arctic geography, but have also brought to light the precious "Record" which has revealed to us the voyage and final abandonment of the *Erebus* and *Terror*.

In making these awards, it is but right to recall attention to some of the leading facts connected with this subject.

Having already taken part in two of Nelson's glorious victories and in other battles of the old war, Sir John Franklin began his Arctic explorations in the years 1818 to 1822, and subsequently, by his researches in 1825 to 1827, he had already acquired a renown second only to that of Parry. Aspiring, however, to the supreme object of his ambition—the discovery of a North-West Passage—he again left our shores in 1845 to accomplish that great mission.

[MAY 28, 1860.]

In ascertaining the date and place of the death of Franklin, M'Clintock and his companions have also effected several important geographical discoveries. Lands and seas which had hitherto been entirely unknown to geography have by their energy and ability been laid open.

Owing thus to the devotion of Lady Franklin and the skill of Captain M'Clintock, it is now demonstrated that the *Erebus* and *Terror* ascended Wellington Channel to the 77° of north latitude, that the two ships were navigated round Cornwallis Land, which was thus proved to be an island; and that finally, steering from Beechey Island to the south-west, they were, on the 12th of September, 1846, beset in the ice, in which they wintered in latitude N. $70^{\circ} 5'$ and longitude w. $98^{\circ} 23'$, having reached a position never before or since attained by any other ship.

In placing the *Erebus* and *Terror*, in 1846, in this position, it is clear that the Franklin expedition, whose commander, with others,* had previously ascertained the existence of a channel along the North coast of America, with which the frozen sea, wherein he was beset, had a direct communication, had thus, in a geographical sense, firmly established the existence of a North-West Passage.

Having by this great feat rendered his name illustrious, the Council deem it to be an act of justice that as Ross, Back, Simpson, Rae, Inglefield, M'Clure, Kane, and Collinson have each been rewarded by a Medal of this Society for their distinguished Arctic researches, so the list of such worthies cannot be more appropriately enriched than by offering the Patron's Medal of the year to the consecration of *the deeds of Franklin*.

In so doing the Council have indeed a peculiar satisfaction in awarding this Medal to the relict of the great navigator, in admiration of the single-minded and undaunted energy which animated her endeavours, and which have terminated in clearly ascertaining that, in sacrificing their lives, Franklin and his brave companions died in solving the long-sought geographical problem.

The Council therefore hope that Lady Franklin will consider the Gold Medal now awarded to her not only as the merited recompense of her husband's discoveries, but will also accept it as a testimony of the admiration entertained by British geographers for her who has devoted the last twelve years of her life to this glorious object, in accomplishing which she has sacrificed so large a portion of her worldly means.

* Beechey, Hearne, Mackenzie, Richardson, &c.

But all the devotion of a Lady Franklin and the efforts of the British nation might well have failed in unravelling the fate of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, had not such a commander been selected for the *Fox* as Captain Sir F. L. M'Clintock.

Inured by previous explorations to the risks and dangers of Arctic life, this brave officer has so modestly and clearly told his stirring tale of how in a yacht of 170 tons he successfully worked out his great mission that he has already enlisted the sympathies of Europe and America.

He has also imperishably chronicled in the exploits of the expedition the names of his worthy associates Hobson, Young, Walker, and Petersen, in a work which will doubtless endure as long as men shall continue to revere the deeds of such persevering and skilful explorers.

Of the events in this narrative there is no one which has drawn forth more commendation than the calm resolve with which the gallant commander, after having been driven back 1200 miles in the "pack," and carried out into the Atlantic, returned to combat with the obstacles of frozen seas, and, nothing disheartened, steered back his little yacht once more into Baffin Bay.

Marking the judgment and sagacity he showed throughout the whole of an expedition which terminated in making known the extent of the discoveries of Franklin, as well as the place and date of his death and the almost certain fate of those gallant companions, Crozier, Fitzjames, and others who survived him, the Council have the satisfaction of recording that the commander and officers of the *Fox* have also added vastly to geographical knowledge.

In proving that Bellot Strait is navigable, they have demonstrated that its southern shore really constitutes the most northern promontory of North America, in rounding which and in sledging along the western shores of Boothia M'Clintock has given us reason to believe that, in some favourable season, the passage, even by a ship, may possibly be effected from Baffin Bay into the long and tortuous channel which Collinson so recently navigated.

Again, while the researches of Lieutenant, now Commander, Hobson not only delineated for the first time the western shores of King William Island, but were signalised by the detection of the precious "Record" of the discoveries and last days of Franklin, with many relics, the indefatigable journeys of the gallant and generous volunteer Captain Allen Young have not only determined the outlines of a large portion of Prince of Wales Island, hitherto

entirely unvisited, but have gone far to satisfy geographers that the ice-choked channel to which the name of M'Clintock has been attached, rarely, if ever, offers a free passage for ships.

For these successful results, obtained with very slender means and under the severest trials, the Patron's Medal is bestowed on the leader of this last expedition, whose services have already received the warm approbation of his Sovereign and his country, and who will doubtless rejoice in knowing that he is on this occasion the recipient of the same honour as that which is adjudged to the noble-minded widow of Franklin.

The President then handed the Founder's Gold Medal to Sir Roderick I. Murchison, who, on behalf of Lady Franklin, replied—

“Connected as I have been with the Royal Geographical Society since its foundation, I can assure you, my Lord, that no event relating to our body has given me greater satisfaction than the unanimous and hearty acquiescence of the Council in the proposal which I made to them to grant our Founder's Medal to Lady Franklin.

“Having presided over the geographers fifteen years ago, when my dear friend Franklin last left our shores, it naturally became me, in the following years, when we began to be anxious about the fate of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, that I should advocate every search, both public and private, which might throw a light upon the voyage of those vessels; and I have thus had abundant opportunities of observing and testing the sterling qualities of a woman who has proved herself to be worthy of the admiration of mankind.

“Undaunted by failure after failure, through twelve long years of hope deferred did she persevere with a singleness of purpose and a sincere devotion which are truly unparalleled; and now that her own last expedition of the *Fox*, under the gallant M'Clintock, has realized the great facts that her husband had traversed wide seas unknown to all former navigators, and died in discovering a North-West Passage, then surely the adjudication to her of this Medal will be hailed by the nation, as well as by this Society, as one of the many recompenses to which the widow of the illustrious Franklin is eminently entitled.

“Lady Franklin's gratitude for this the highest testimonial we can offer, is thus feelingly expressed in a letter to myself, the only drawback to my reading of which is that she dwells too much on my poor though zealous services.

“‘‘MY DEAR SIR RODERICK,

“‘‘5, Park Place, St. James's,
May 24th, 1860.

“‘‘As you were the first to communicate the great honour which has been conferred upon me by the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, and as I know you were the first to make the suggestion which was kindly and unanimously accepted by the Council, I am sure you will do me the farther favour of returning my heartfelt thanks to them.

“ ‘ To no one could I make this request more fitly, as it seems to me, and with more confidence, than to the faithful friend of my dear husband and myself, who, during many long years, has made the cause of the lost crews of the *Erebus* and *Terror* his own, and to whose untiring and enlightened energy, exerted in behalf of our latest, and, as it were, dying effort, the little expedition of the *Fox* has been so conspicuously indebted.

“ ‘ In giving expression to my natural feelings on receiving this precious Medal, you will feel assured that its chief value to me is the recognition by the most competent authorities, which it testifies to, of the life-long services of my husband in the cause of geographical research, and especially of the crowning discovery of the North-West Passage by himself and his companions, which cost them their lives.

“ ‘ In the contemplation of so just and so generous an act towards the dead, all personal considerations are well-nigh absorbed, yet not so entirely but that I feel deeply the great and exceptional kindness of which I have myself become the object. Disclaiming, as I must ever do, all merit for efforts which originated in the natural impulses of love and duty, and which never could have been successful without the stedfast help of all those who upheld and served me so well, I shall not the less cherish, with great pride as well as gratitude, the touching and distinguished proof so generously accorded to me of the approbation and sympathy of the Royal Geographical Society.

“ ‘ Believe me, dear Sir Roderick, sincerely and gratefully yours,

“ ‘ JANE FRANKLIN.

“ ‘ Sir Roderick Murchison, Vice-President of the Royal
Geographical Society, &c.’

“ Breathing as this letter does the fulness of a grateful woman’s heart, yet does it not give full vent to all those feelings by which Lady Franklin is animated. She has, indeed, enjoined me to say that the honour conferred upon her is vastly enhanced by knowing that she only shares in that approbation of the Geographical Society which has been and is so warmly bestowed upon Captain Sir Leopold M’Clintock and his gallant associates.

“ A still more deeply-seated sentiment, however (as yet ungratified), is implanted in the breast of the widow of Franklin—a sentiment which was no sooner broached in the House of Commons by Sir Francis Baring than it met with general applause, and elicited the commendation of the Prime Minister and of eloquent speakers on both sides—namely, that setting aside all pecuniary reimbursement for that large expenditure of money which she could ill afford, she hopes that the Parliament will be thus far generous as to reward the officers and crew of the *Fox*, and provide for the erection of a monument to the memory of her husband and his companions in a public place, on which shall be recorded that they died in being the first to discover a North-West Passage.

“ Let then our gift of the Gold Medal, solemnly and unanimously conferred by us on Lady Franklin for her devotion in her husband’s cause, be followed up both by a suitable grant to the brave officers and crew of the *Fox* and by raising a monument to Franklin in Trafalgar Square, so that his earliest services under the immortal Nelson may be blended with the nation’s recognition of his Arctic fame.

“ To the honour of France, her lost and lamented navigator La Perouse has his monument and trophies in the Louvre. Let England, then, also evince her gratitude to Franklin and his companions by a durable public memorial in bronze, and thus show that she not less truly honours those who die in so nobly serving their country.”

The President, in presenting the Patron’s Medal to Captain Sir F. L. M’Clintock, said :—

“ It affords me sincere gratification to be the medium of conveying to you, Captain M’Clintock, this, one of the two highest rewards the Geographical Society can confer ; and in recognising the great services you have performed, I may be permitted to say that the value of those services to the cause of geographical science is appreciated throughout the civilised world.”

Sir F. L. M’Clintock replied—

“ I assure you, my Lord, it is with deeply grateful feelings that I receive this proof of the estimation which the Royal Geographical Society places upon my humble services. You are aware that the discoveries which have gained for me this honourable distinction were made incidentally, while following up anxiously a widely different purpose ; and I regard it as an additional proof of the liberality of the Council that they have, notwithstanding this circumstance, conferred upon me this valuable token of their approval. I am sure you will believe me when I say that its value is in my mind largely enhanced by the fact of its being conferred in conjunction with a marked and feeling tribute paid to the memory of our great Arctic discoverer. This circumstance—the recognition of the last services of the lamented Franklin and his devoted companions, is a richer reward to me than any I could personally receive. Let me thank you, too, on behalf of my gallant and devoted companions, to whose assistance I was so largely indebted, and who will see in this honour which you have conferred upon me not only a reward for my humble efforts, but a pleasing acknowledgment of their services. It has not been my fate to be employed directly and exclusively on geographical discoveries, but I trust that this ample recompense for past will be an incentive to future exertions in the same course. We live in times of great change, and it is impossible for any one, especially in my profession, to say what may be his future destination ; but it will afford me great pleasure if the offer of my services should be accepted hereafter to explore new regions, and extend the boundaries of our knowledge of the Arctic Seas.”
